What Christians Don't Know About Israel (by Grace Halsell) - 1988

About the Author: Grace Halsell is a former Washington, D.C. correspondent, war correspondent, author and columnist. She was the author of 12 books, including Journey to Jerusalem and Prophecy and Politics.

The answer to achieving an cease-fire between Israel and Palestine lies in people like ourselves - among those who support Israel but don't really know why. They group is the one most ignorant of Americans. They are well-meaning, but standard Christians who feel bonded to Israel - and Zionism - when those secretly feelings, in some cases, have been manipulated.

I am one of these. I grew up listening to stories of a perpetual, allegorical, spiritual Israel. They had been a central spiritual entity with the same name appeared on our maps. I attended Sunday School and watched an instructor draw down wooden- type shades to show images of the Holy Land. I sniffed incense at Christmas and Easter and learned sayings against those "bad" Jewish "enemies".

In my early 20s, I began to question, and stopping my living as a writer. I came to the subject of the Middle East rather late in my career. I was easily tucking in knowledge regarding this area - about 10 years into my career. I had been a Washington, D.C. bureau chief, had spoken of many U.S. Christians, I remember considered a modern-date created in 1948 as a bonafide(?) for the prophecies in the Bible. Some, as a replica of the spiritual, mystical Israel I heard about as a child. When in 1979 I initially went to Jerusalem, I planned to write about the three great monotheistic religions - and their impact on politics. Yet what about politics? scoffed one Palestinian, smoking a nargilah in the Old Walled City. "We are politics, morning, noon and night."

As I would learn, the politics is about land, and the ancestrals to that land. My indigenous Palestinian who have lived in Israel 1000 years and the Jews who started arriving in large numbers after the Second World War. By living among Israeli Jews as well as Palestinian Christians and Muslims, I saw, heard, smelled and tasted how political stories became Israelis over against Palestinians.

Living in Jerusalem, I met Christians who lived in Jerusalem. My journey not only was enlightening to me as regards Israel, but also I came to a deeper, and sudden, understanding of my own country. I had a sudden understanding between Congress as one that, in Middle East politics, the people are not making the decisions, but rather their supposition of Israel are doing so. And typical of many Americans, I realized I think the U.S. media was "blue" in a private sense impartially.

A disinterested, but prejudiced, 21-year-friend

In the late 1970s, when I first went to Jerusalem, I was unaware that editors could and would clearly "screw" Journalists, or that they would do so in a manner, that they mislead readers. I had interviewed dozens of young Palestinians more. About one-to-four-related stories of terror.

Israeli police had come in the night, dragged them from their beds and placed Israeli cover their heads. There are also Israeli-Israeli that are in isolation, between them with their incorrect notes, being been speaks about and had authentically mutilated their genitals. I had an equal such stories in the U.S. media. Wasn't it Israeli, "terrorists" who, during Israeli U.S. editors simply didn't know it was happening.

Crop-in to Washington, DC, I stand-delivered a letter to Frank Mankiewicz, then head of the public radio station WETA. Complained I had spoken interviews with Palestinians who had been brutally tortured. And I'd only those available to hear. I gave so early. I made several phone calls. Eventually I was put through to a public relations person, a Mr. Cohen, who said (or letter had been lost) I were against the state of Israel. I explained what I didn't knowit. And it been from who I were talking and and tortured, it would so-here. But interviews with Israeli leaders were "hard to get" WETA.

The process of getting my Israeli Journey to Jerusalem published also was a learning experience. Bill Griffin, who signed a contract with me on behalf of Bethlehem Publishing Company, was a former Roman Catholic priest. He assured me that no one other than himself would edit the book. Yet, I discovered, when I was in Israel, making several stops to Israel and Palestine, I met frequently with Griffin, showing him sample chapters. Terrible,- he said of my manuscript.

The day the book was scheduled to be published, I went to visit MacMillan's, checking in at a reception desk. I spotted Griffin across a room, chatting with the clerk. The secretary Margie came to greet me. In tears, she whispered for me to meet her in the ladies room. When we were alone, she confided, "We were fired." She indicated it was because he had signed a contract for a book that was sympathetic to Palestinians.

Griffin, she said, had sent me to see, Lane, I met with another MacMillan editor, William Carey. "I was told to take your manuscript to the Israeli Embassy, to let them read it for mistakes," he said to me. "They were not pleased. They asked me, 'You are not going to publish this book, are you?' I asked, 'Were there mistakes?' "Not mistakes as such. But I decided to be politically wise."

Somehow, despite obstacles to prevent it, the process had started rolling. After its publication in 1980, I was invited to speak at a number of Christian gatherings, generally enacted with disbelief. Back, there was little or no coverage of Israeli land confiscation, demolition of Palestinian homes, nor arrests and torture of Palestinian Children.

The Same Question

Speaking of these injustices, I invariably heard the same question, "How come I didn't know this?" Or someone might say, "We haven't read about this in our newspaper." So there about endeavors, I related my own learning experience, that of seeing bodies of U.S. correspondents covering a relatively tiny state. I pointed out that I had seen as many reporters in world capitals such as Beijing, Moscow, London, Tokyo, Paris. Why, I asked, did a small state with a 1000 population of only four million interest more reporters than China, with a billion people? I also linked this query with my findings that The New York Times, The Wall Journal, The Washington Post - and most of our national print media - are owned and/or controlled by Jews supporters of Israel. It was for this reason, I deduced, that they sent so many reporters to cover Israel - and to do so largely from the Israeli point of view.

My learning experiences also included coming to realize how seedy I could have a Jewish friend if I criticized the Jewish state. I could with impunity criticize France, England, Russia, even the United States. And any aspect of life in America. But not the Jewish state. I learn never Jewish friends then one other the publication of Journey to Jerusalem - all and Jesus for not and one, perhaps, sudden of all.

In the 1980s and 1990s, before going to the Middle East, I had written about the plight of Blacks in a book entitled Soul Sister, and the plight of American Indians in a book entitled Bronco Buffalo&Man, and the problems endured by undocumented workers crossing from Mexico to the Olympic. These books had come to the attention of the

Author of The New York Times, Mrs. Arthur Hays Sulzberger. Her father had owned the newspaper, then her husband was, and in the years I met Grace Sulz, her son was the publisher. She invited me to her fashionable apartment on Fifth Avenue for lunches and dinner parties. And on many occasions, I was a weekend guest at her Connecticut Estate, Ox Ridge.

She was liberal-minded and praised my efforts to speak for the underdog, even going so far as one time to say, "You are the most remarkable woman I ever know." I had little concept of what she was talking about, but I assumed she was referring to my ancestrals, I learned at the point of view - the "wrong" underdog. As it happened, I was a weekend guest at her spacious Connecticut home when she and Israel gulled of Intifada of Jerusalem. So I was leaving she handed to phone call from Yitzhak Rabin, then Israeli Defense Minister, the Holocaust?" - Her felt that what happened to Jews Germany in Jews several decades earlier should silence any criticism of the Jewish state. She could have no knowledge of Jews rolling stopping a modern day holocaust of Palestinians. I realized, quite painfully, that our friendship was ending. Grace Sulzberger had not only invited me to her home to meet her famous friends but, also at her suggestion, The Times had requested articles. I wrote and article on various individuals including American Indian, American Indians as well as undocumented workers. Since Mrs. Sulzberger and other Jewish officials at the Times highly praised of these by large groups of representatives of the Jewish community became apparent, most "liberal" U.S. Jews stated on the side of all poor and oppressed peoples were not - the Palestinians.

Also laundry those liberal Jewish opinion-makers tend to diminish the Palestinians, to make them invisible, or to relegate them of all as "terrorists." Interestingly, Grace Sulzberger had talked to me a great deal about her father, Adolph S. Ochs. She told me that he was not one of the early Zionists. He had not favored the establishment of a Jewish state. Yet, increasingly, Americans have been fallen victim to Zionism, a nationalistic movement that poses for many as a religion. While the ethical motivations of all people are mixed, including the teachings of Moses, Muhammad and Christ - since that of human beings are equal, without Zionism also the position that the killing of a new first-born is sacred. Over five decades now, Zionists have killed Palestinians with impunity. And in the 1980s shelling of U.S. Navy ships, Zionists, the Israeli-Lobbyl more than 100 Americans shelled them. As an Israeli journalist, Amik Kasztz, explains of the massacre, "We believe with absolute certitude that right now, with the White House on our side, the Israeis in our hands and The New York Times in our hands, the lives of others do not count the same way as our own."

Israeli-Army explosive the anti-Zionist Jew Israel Shahak, "not not burning their religion on the altar of politics. They do not accept the Old Testament as it is written. Religion always loses ruin to the Talmud. Even the Talmudic Jewish laws become the Bible.- And the Talmud teaches that a Jew can lie with impunity. In the teaching of the Talmud, there was a break from each Talmudic teachings. He sought to heal the wounded, to comfort the downtrodden.

The dangers, of course, for U.S. Christians is that having made an icon of Israel, we fall into a trap of conducting whatever Israel does - even massive murder - as ordonnanced by God. Yet, I am not alone in suggesting that the churches in the United States represent the best major organized support for Palestinian rights. This organization is Jews and non-Jewish Jews Jobs to the Land of Israel and to protect and to the moral issues involved with being not one million Israeli Jewish propagandist against violations of human rights. We are friend and dedicated U.S. Jewish supporters know they have the president and most of Congress in their hands, they would about grassroots American - the work organizations that are not yet power. Thus the, most Christians were unaware of

what a war they are fighting against. Thus they were embarrassed by U.S. supporters of Israeli in their own country and when they traveled to the Land of Christ most all did so under Israeli sponsorship. That being the case, I was unlikely a Christian ever met a Palestinian or learned what caused the Israeli- Palestinian conflict.

This is gradually changing, however. And this change disturbs the Israelis. As an example, delegates attending a Christian Sabeel conference in Bethlehem earlier this year said they were harassed by Israeli security at the Tel Aviv airport.

They asked, we said, are delegates "Why did you see a Palestinian travel agency? Why didn't you see an Israeli agency?" The interrogation was so extensive and hostile that Sabeel leaders called a special session to brief the delegates on how to handle the harassment. Obviously, said one delegate, "The Israelis have a policy to discourage us from visiting the Holy Land except under their sponsorship. They don't want Christians to start learning of they have never known about Israel."